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**THE NEW “SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP”: REDEFINING
AMERICA’S STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH GERMANY**

by

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Abstract

Germany is the undisputed economic and political powerhouse of Europe. However, the balance of Berlin's instruments of national power is disproportionate, underscoring a long-standing doctrine of military restraint. President Joachim Gauck's 2013-2014 calls for Germany to assume more global responsibility have materialized via several forms: Germany's significant contributions in Afghanistan, response to Ebola, delivery of weapons to the Iraqi Kurds, and attempts to diplomatically resolve the crisis in Ukraine. As Germany's influence on the international scene increases, so must its commitment to invest, train, and employ military forces in defense of the international order from which it has so greatly benefited. The United States should encourage Germany in this regard and must take into account power shifts in the European status quo. Washington should deepen its political, economic, and military ties to Germany, investing in the long-term "special relationship" of the future.

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Chapter 1 - INTRODUCTION

The year 2014 was rated by the Pentagon as the most “complex year” since 1968¹—and 2015 shows no signs thus far of diminishing international security challenges. In particular, developments in Ukraine, a resurgent Russia, and the emergence of the Islamic State have underscored the critical need for a strong, unified European security framework—except that the one country that must lead, Germany, still struggles to find its voice in the security realm. Berlin’s global political and economic influence as the driving force within the European Union presupposes certain responsibilities, among them the need to assert a greater military role on an international scale. Germany has too long been haunted by its past and cannot allow the shadows of the Second World War to cloud its future calculus. The German position as *de facto* leader of the European project necessitates Berlin shedding its long-held, non-interventionist dogma and embracing the concurrent military and security roles which are now demanded by today’s complex challenges. While significant hurdles in the application of German hard power have been overcome since the 1990 Reunification, more must be done to fundamentally shift the dynamics. Such sweeping policy initiatives, however, remain decidedly in German hands.

In parallel, the United States, which has introduced a new security doctrine of heavier reliance on NATO allies (evidenced by the Libya intervention), must reexamine its current model of strategic partnerships in Europe to account for power shifts that will reshape the status quo. At the heart of this discussion is the fundamental question posed by former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger: “so who do I call to reach Europe?”² In 2015, only the German Chancellor, *not* the President of the European Commission, wields the political and economic clout to claim this mantle. Germany, more than any other Eurozone country, drives policy decisions within all key European political and economic institutions.

Nonetheless, Germany itself is moving through a period of political “soul searching” in terms of rightsizing its role in the world. President Joachim Gauck’s October 2013 address on the occasion of the celebration of German reunification and remarks during the January 2014 Munich Security Conference called for a more engaging global role for Berlin. Gauck’s themes inspired what many Germany watchers call a “new” foreign policy and security approach.³ In particular, Gauck stated that, “when the last resort—sending in the Bundeswehr (army)—comes to be discussed, Germany should not say ‘no’ on principle, nor should it say ‘yes’ unthinkingly.”⁴ This statement emphasized publically what policymakers in and outside of Germany have been privately thinking for some time. Despite such forward-leaning language, however, large portions of Germany’s population and even elements of the current “grand coalition” government still remain uncomfortable with an aggressive German security approach.

Moreover, political and economic realities are driving shifts in America’s strategic partnerships with Europe. Most notably, the “special relationship” with the United Kingdom may not merit as significant a role in Washington’s global calculus as in the past. The United Kingdom is undoubtedly an important partner for the United States and wields considerable influence on international markets via London’s financial sector. However, a dangerously reduced military budget, uncertain future within the European Union, and meager contributions to anti-Islamic State efforts and Ukraine crisis management, highlight Britain’s diminished influence in global affairs.⁵ The Conservatives’ May 2015 victory has only added further uncertainty about how Britain’s stormy relationship with the European Union will proceed.⁶ France, although willing to aggressively employ its military forces abroad, does not possess the economic or political influence to decisively steer European Union policy. Indeed, on issues of Afghanistan, responding to Ebola, supplying weapons to the Kurds fighting ISIL, and

negotiating with Moscow, it is Germany that has emerged as Europe's leader.

Responding to the global complexities of 2014, Germany undertook an ambitious foreign policy agenda, driven in large part by Russian aggression in Ukraine. But actual German commitment to modernize and invest in its military remains in question. With a defense budget of 1.3% of overall GDP, Germany falls visibly short of fulfilling the 2% NATO provision.⁷ As Germany slowly eases into its newfound foreign policy initiatives, Washington should encourage, support, and reinforce Berlin's position, while simultaneously emboldening Germany to assume a greater role in military and security affairs. Ultimately, this essay submits that the United States should look to elevate the profile of its current relationship with Germany to that of a long-term "special relationship," in which Germany emerges as the most significant US political, economic, and security partner in Europe.

Chapter 2 - COLD WAR LEGACY – MODERN IMPLICATIONS

The legacy of 20th century German history has perhaps damaged more than just the will to invest in a robust military. Indeed, Germany's perception of itself has also significantly affected how it conducts foreign policy. Unlike other major capitals such as Washington, London, or Paris, Berlin did not play as significant a role in shaping international affairs as a world power throughout the centuries.⁸ Rather, Berlin experienced a meteoric rise and fall in the late 19th century and early part of the 20th century—but was ultimately left a divided city within a divided country.⁹ That its security was guaranteed by foreign powers from 1945-1990 weighs heavily on the German psyche. Moreover, these experiences gradually shaped a foundation for the accepted positions of military reluctance and excessive restraint (originally intended as "atonement for past mistakes") in the exercise of modern Germany's foreign policy.

The great military historian Russell Weigley wrote that military policy consists of “two primary elements, the structure of a nation’s armed forces, and the strategy for their employment.”¹⁰ In Germany’s case, the strategy for employment of the Bundeswehr has been profoundly influenced by a deep sense of national guilt over responsibility for the two great world wars of the 20th century. This negative view of the military instrument of national power resulted in an institutional doctrine of non-interventionism that dominated Cold War thinking, but whose legacy lingers even today.

During the Cold War, the existential threat posed by the then Soviet Union necessitated any serious German security policies to dovetail with Washington’s strategic view.¹¹ Nowhere is this more apparent than in the limitations set on the use of military force as articulated in the German Constitution. The framers of the Federal Republic of Germany’s (West Germany) constitution endeavored to limit the role of the military to defensive action. In this way, civilian control would prohibit the armed forces from seeking “hegemonic ambitions” and prevent troops being sent abroad absent a clear mandate based on international law.¹² Additionally, German law draws a clear, legalistic separation between offensive military action and law enforcement authorities.¹³ This confusing legal framework and unclear delineation of responsibility complicates German efforts to employ military forces abroad.

The reunification of Germany on October 3, 1990 was the political personification that signified the end of the Cold War. Despite the fanfare and hysteria that accompanied this watershed event, a reunited Germany also became a source of tension within European capitals. Many quietly contemplated what kind of “new” Germany would emerge and what type of security doctrine it might exercise in an increasingly unipolar world. In 1994, Germany’s Federal Constitutional Court issued a breakthrough decision allowing out-of-area deployments

for the Bundeswehr.¹⁴ This decision served as an important baseline that would allow subsequent governments to consider how and in what capacity German military forces might operate in overseas contingency operations.

At the same time, international humanitarian crises of the 1990s such as the massacres in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia began to awaken a national consciousness of international responsibility amongst Germany's population.¹⁵ In 1998, Socialist Chancellor Gerhard Schröder expanded many of Germany's security operations. Under Schröder, Germany's participation in the Allied Air Campaign against Serbia demonstrated its firm commitment to the NATO alliance, as well as a willingness to exercise the military option absent a United Nations Security Council mandate (a first in post-reunification German history) authorizing military action.¹⁶ While this development certainly was a key step, it did not comprehensively answer fundamental questions in Germany regarding a more "hands-on" foreign and security policy.

POST 9/11 GERMAN SECURITY POLICY

The terror attacks of September 11, 2001 sparked an international debate on security policy. Cross-border terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and their nexus to failed or weak states presented daunting challenges to world governments.¹⁷ Globalization, viewed in most Western circles as an indispensable element to global economic prosperity, was subsequently exploited by terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda to advance their extremist agenda. Richard Aldrich eloquently remarked that "globalization has created a relatively borderless world in which states move clumsily but wherein their illicit opponents move elegantly."¹⁸ This sentiment was echoed on both sides of the Atlantic by the revelation that several of the 9/11 hijackers had resided in and attended university in Germany, raising concerns about Berlin's internal security.¹⁹

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, Chancellor Schröder declared his “unlimited solidarity” with Washington and pledged Germany’s full support.²⁰ Schröder took personal political risk when he combined a resolution to send German troops to Afghanistan with a vote of confidence in his government, which narrowly succeeded.²¹ Additionally, both Chancellor Schröder and then-Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer were instrumental in rallying European diplomatic efforts for the November 2001 Bonn Conference on the future of Afghanistan.²² The Bonn Conference laid out the vision for a post-Taliban government in Afghanistan, and is often characterized as the foundation of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).²³ While Washington was focused on forging a “coalition of the willing” for its Afghanistan campaign, German efforts were largely directed at building support within international institutions. Foreign Minister Fischer in particular labored to coordinate a common European position as well as embolden the United Nations.²⁴

Germany’s initial contribution of 1,200 troops was fairly small, but reflective of the cautious, reluctant, and reticent nature of German security initiatives up to that time. The truly divergent German view of Afghanistan operations vis-à-vis the US perspective can be observed in the excessive caveats imposed on Bundeswehr forces. For example, German government narratives emphasized *Vernetzte Sicherheit* (networked security), including construction projects, support to the local populace, but not combat operations.²⁵ German troops were not allowed to discharge their weapons except in cases of “imminent threat,” and only then after having issued warnings in multiple languages.²⁶ In Berlin’s view Bundeswehr troops (with the exception of some special operations forces) were not active participants in the American-led Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, which was viewed as an “offensive” action. Rather, German narratives emphasized the role of the Bundeswehr as an important element of the International

Security Assistance Force, conveying a more humanitarian, peace-building mission. Indeed, reflecting the political reality within Germany, members of the government refrained from classifying German troops' participation in Afghanistan as a "war," a term that would remain taboo (officially, the German government referred to Afghanistan as "non-international armed conflict within the parameters of international law"²⁷) until almost ten years into the conflict.²⁸

As the situation in Afghanistan dragged on, Bundeswehr troops weathered a transition from an entirely humanitarian and peacekeeping approach to a full-blown counterinsurgency campaign. The nature of Bundeswehr's role had morphed (in practice, *not* in legal terms) since initial operations began in October of 2001, reflecting the changing nature of operations on the ground. In 2012, there were nearly 4,400 German troops serving in Afghanistan and over 54 had lost their lives during the period of 2002-2013.²⁹ Despite these numbers, the German public and political elites did not truly come to terms with the conflict or the broader reality of the exercise of German hard power. The Berlin government maintained its ambiguous definition of the situation in Afghanistan and the German populace writ large struggled with the reality of overseas military deployments through 2014.

Nonetheless, Germany offered to keep its forces in Afghanistan post-2014, in support of operation RESOLUTE SUPPORT. Nearly 900 Bundeswehr personnel serve in Afghanistan at present, the largest non-US contingent (see figure 1).³⁰ The German experience in Afghanistan provides an important analytic example of the shifting nature of Berlin's foreign and military policy. More importantly, as the United States seeks to encourage Germany to assume a greater role in international affairs and security policy, it must take into account the difficulty with which Germany struggles to define its own hard power.

CHAPTER 3-CRISIS YEAR 2014 AND BEYOND

GERMAN MILITARY REALITIES

The experience of Afghanistan created a new generation of combat-tested German officers and non-commissioned officers virtually non-existent since 1945. This newly-acquired personnel baseline will undoubtedly prove invaluable as the Bundeswehr implements modernization plans. Conversely, the Afghanistan campaign also accentuated glaring shortfalls in German military readiness, experience gaps, and capability limitations. Berlin's current defense budget, at 33 billion Euros, equates to roughly 1.3% of total GDP—far below NATO's stated 2% goal.³¹ A recent Atlantic Council study suggested that "Germany is a...second-rate political and military power. German weakness is NATO's most significant problem. A stronger Germany would be the greatest boost to NATO's future."³² Indeed, inconsistencies between German rhetoric regarding a more engaged foreign/security agenda versus actual commitment to fund military capacity remain a barrier to future force development.

On 18 March 2015, the German government announced an increase in the defense budget by a total of 8 billion Euros extended throughout the next four years, or until 2019.³³ The international press largely portrayed this announcement as a major policy reversal by Berlin, but a closer examination suggests otherwise. The proposed numbers do not take into account inflation and represent a nominal to medium spending increase. Moreover, it is unclear if actual funding will be boosted until 2016.³⁴ In 2015, the actual trajectory of German defense spending is -0.5%.³⁵ Positive trends in German GDP growth suggest that Germany could invest more in its military infrastructure as well as borrow at more favorable rates. Ultimately, the political will to enact such sweeping measures is a necessary prerequisite. In its desire to maintain budget surpluses, Berlin has thus far avoided major order of magnitude increases in defense

expenditures. As will be highlighted in the policy recommendations chapter, German defense spending is one significant area for continued engagement and encouragement by Washington.

Current Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen has served in her current capacity since December 2013—the first female to ever hold this post in Germany.³⁶ An ardent EU-proponent, she has consistently advocated for heightened military integration within a European context. European Union Commissioner Jean-Claude Juncker’s proposal for a European Union Army was met with positive comments from Germany, underscoring the European-centric approach favored by German political culture.³⁷ This philosophy is also a key element of Chancellor Merkel’s Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party platform.³⁸ Von der Leyen has advocated a transitional framework whereby the Bundeswehr is streamlined into a more agile, deployable force. The defense minister is also of particular significance as she is viewed by many as a potential successor to Angela Merkel.³⁹

FOREIGN MINISTRY “REVIEW 2014” AND IMPLICATIONS

Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier took charge as foreign policy chief in December 2013, his second time serving as foreign minister.⁴⁰ Upon assuming office, Steinmeier directed a comprehensive review of German foreign policy that envisioned Germany’s proper role in the world and a methodology for engaging in global issues. Designated “Review 2014,” Steinmeier submitted that the aim of his project was to “reflect on German foreign policy’s future prospects by way of dialogue between the Federal Foreign Office and the most important foreign and security policy stakeholders, including civil society.”⁴¹ Review 2014 brought together policy experts from all over the world who contributed to a final report that was presented to the German Bundestag in February 2015.

The primary conclusion articulated in the final report is a recognition that “the world has

changed and the Federal Foreign Office also needs to change.”⁴² Three major focus areas emerged from Review 2014:

- 1) **Crisis** - Crises will tend to be the norm in the next 10 to 15 years. We are responding to this by restructuring our organization and creating a separate Crisis Prevention, Stabilization and Post-conflict Peacebuilding Directorate-General.
- 2) **Order** - We are thus creating a place where we can make extensive use of our most important principle for international order, namely multilateralism.
- 3) **Europe** - We thought and talked a lot about Europe in this review. Many experts around the world regard Germany as the leading power in Europe, a power that should generate greater influence for the European model in world affairs.⁴³

The timing of “Review 2014” was certainly prescient, as 2014 emerged as a true “crisis year” for the international order. Review 2014’s context is so broad in scope that it fails to deliver as a detailed planning document. It does, however, provide key insights into shifts within German thinking regarding foreign policy, security policy, and Germany’s role in the world. The prevailing opinion suggests that Germany must become more engaged in the world, must respond in a more agile fashion, and must work to strengthen the international order, its institutions, and the further integration of the European Union.⁴⁴ American policymakers should take note of the multilateralist philosophical foundation—if Washington is to persuade Berlin to assume a greater international role (particularly in terms of military power), it must understand Germany’s own perception of its place and responsibility in the world.

EURO CRISIS—OR OPPORTUNITY?

The debt crisis which has rocked the European Union’s core since 2008 presents a significant hurdle in further institutional integration. The rise of the ultra-left SYRIZA party in Greece in January 2015 and failure to reach an agreement with its creditors on reforms/debt restructuring has put an immense strain on the common currency. Germany, with the largest economy in Europe and massive export engine, has provided the Greek government with

significant financial assistance since the beginning of the crisis. According to the German Federal Ministry of Finance:

“A total of €73bn was paid out within the framework of the first program for Greece (eurozone share: €52.9bn; IMF: €20.1bn = XDR 17.5bn). Germany’s share of the disbursed funds within the framework of the first program totals €15.19bn. On 31 March 2015, Greece repaid XDR 9.9bn to the IMF. This corresponds to around €12.7bn (using the exchange rate on 31 March 2015).”⁴⁵ (please see figure 2 for a detailed of Greece’s second loan program)

Additionally, Germany has made available over €210 billion as actual appropriation of financial guarantees to the European Financial Stability Facility.⁴⁶ As the numbers suggest, Germany’s financial and political commitment to the Eurozone is significant. Germany has notably emerged from the crisis stronger than before, the only major European country to fare so well.⁴⁷ As such, the debt crisis presented Germany with an institutional, albeit unsolicited leadership opportunity: successive German governments since 2008 needed to hold together an often shaky “coalition” of 19 countries. Such a significant leadership role would have been unthinkable at the time of the German reunification. Berlin’s insistence on “financial assistance through economic structural reforms” has garnered significant criticism in European circles, with austerity measures advocated by Germany compared to a “dictatorship.”⁴⁸

Nonetheless, Berlin continues to serve as the main architect of the Eurozone project, holding fast to its balanced budget, austerity-based formula. Despite the excessively negative portrayals of German politicians (in particular Chancellor Merkel and Finance Minister Schäuble) in Greek and other media channels, Germany has indicated that some programmatic requirements may be negotiable if Athens can put forth a demonstrable commitment to abide by previous agreements with its creditors (e.g. the European Commission, European Central Bank (headquartered in Germany) and the International Monetary Fund). Germany’s leadership position within Europe can also be viewed as that of a “guarantor” of Eurozone economic

continuity. For example, it is highly likely that initial perceptions suggesting Greek sovereign debt represented a safe investment presupposed an expectation of a bailout led by economically strong countries such as Germany.⁴⁹ Overall, the Eurozone crisis has afforded Germany the opportunity to exercise leadership based on its financial strength, which subsequently translated into political dominance of European institutions.

NATO AND UKRAINE

Russia's aggressive actions in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine have turned upside down previous notions of the status quo in European security. At its core, the dispute between Russia and the West is fundamentally based on diametrically opposing views regarding the rights of sovereign nations to determine their own international associations. Chancellor Angela Merkel's government has performed as a key mediator in the current Ukraine crisis.⁵⁰ Germany's multi-faceted approach to the Ukraine situation is noteworthy—Berlin has assumed a lead role in devising a united, European Union-based front as well as engaging bi-laterally with Moscow to develop a viable solution. Of European Union countries, Germany has been the most visible European interlocutor with Russia and Ukraine, highlighted by the February 2015 Minsk agreement.⁵¹ Germany's official position is that the Ukraine conflict has no military solution and is against escalating the situation by introducing lethal aid to Ukrainian forces.⁵²

More importantly, the crisis in Ukraine has reinforced the role of NATO as Germany's most significant defense partnership. During NATO's 2014 Wales Conference, allies agreed to form a 4,000-troop very high readiness military force that can be deployed rapidly in Eastern Europe and the Baltic states to help protect member nations against potential Russian aggression.⁵³ Shortly before the Summit, President Obama visited Tallinn, Estonia, where he reassured NATO Allies on Russia's periphery. In Tallinn, the President reiterated the meaning

of NATO's Article V by saying "the defense of Tallinn and Riga and Vilnius is just as important as the defense of Berlin, Paris, and London."⁵⁴ Additionally, NATO countries agreed to meet guideline of spending 2% of GDP on defense within the next 10 years—despite this pledge, however, very few states are likely to meet this commitment and Germany is no exception.⁵⁵ While Germany will continue to advocate for a diplomatic solution the impasse, the need to reconstitute and expand NATO's collective military capacity has been brought to the forefront.

PUBLIC OPINION VIS-À-VIS GERMANY'S GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

Germany's Forsa Institute conducted a series of polls in the summer of 2014 in the wake of Russia's intervention in Ukraine. It is interesting to note several of the results regarding German perceptions of how both their country and NATO fit into a broader security framework. For example, in terms of the question, "Should NATO pursue a policy of permanently stationing troops in Poland and the Baltics?" 74% of Germans across all age groups and political parties responded with a clear "no."⁵⁶

To the question, "Should Germany assume greater international responsibility?" the results were much closer. 51% of respondents said no, while 46% stated that Germany should step up its role.⁵⁷ The conditions under which Germany should employ its military forces are the subject of much debate. Here, the question, "For which missions should Germany consider utilization of the Bundeswehr?" elicited the following response: 83% of those who responded stated either humanitarian grounds or defense of Germany's sovereignty,⁵⁸ 63% stated combating terrorism,⁵⁹ 60% for fulfillment of NATO commitments,⁶⁰ and only 29% to guarantee Germany's economic interests.⁶¹

EBOLA RESPONSE, ANTI-ISIS EFFORTS, G-7 PRESIDENCY

Berlin's expanded engagement throughout 2014 also materialized in the form of assistance during the Ebola crisis as well as addressing the threat from the Islamic State. Germany outfitted the first non-US aircraft capable of transporting affected Ebola patients.⁶² In total, Germany has pledged over 100 million Euros to combating the epidemic.⁶³ In August of 2014, Germany arrived at the unprecedented decision to deliver lethal security assistance to Iraqi Kurds in their fight against Islamic State forces.⁶⁴ This development is particularly significant as the Bundestag approved the deployment of 100 soldiers to establish a training center in Irbil for Iraqi forces.⁶⁵ Additionally, the German government co-chaired the Coalition Against the Islamic State Working Group.⁶⁶ As 2015 President of the G-7, Germany's international profile is further enhanced, showcasing its key role in the P5+1 negotiations with Iran, further engagement on the Ukraine crisis, security concerns in Yemen, and the on-going coalition efforts against ISIS.

Chapter 4 - POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Germany exhibited a key shift in its foreign policy in 2014, both in rhetoric and in action. The real transformation, however, is perhaps the new lens through which Germany now sees itself. President Gauck's calls for a more engaged Germany underscore a consciousness that the country plays far too important a role in the world to simply take a back seat. Additionally, Foreign Minister Steinmeier's "Review 2014," while not particularly detailed in substance, facilitated a necessary (and long-overdue) dialogue between German elites, interest groups, and citizenry to take an introspective look at Germany's in the world. This dialogue remains fluid in Berlin and is very far from complete.

Germany fundamentally views its future as tied to the European Union and European

solidarity. There is a genuine resistance in today's political circles to forge an independent, "German" path versus an approach deeply anchored in European institutions. U.S. policymakers must understand that a strong Germany is the foundation upon which a strong European project is built. The balance of power and influence in Europe is shifting and key players on both sides of the Atlantic must react accordingly. This trend is masterfully articulated by former State Department Director of Political Affairs Nicholas Burns, who remarked, "It is very striking the way that Angela Merkel has become the undisputed leader of Europe."⁶⁷

Germany itself is still settling into this newfound role. German actions in the past year clearly demonstrate Berlin's desire to assume a more aggressive foreign policy and more engaged role in the world, including the option to employ military forces in overseas contingencies. However, the extent to which Berlin can make this transition depends on: 1) German political will to make difficult choices on defense prioritization and the extent of its global engagement; 2) Washington's willingness to publically and privately embolden Germany. It is important to note that for every German foreign policy initiative or declaration, an equal amount of skeptics and detractors (both internal and external to Germany) emerge. Many within the European Union itself still resent a German-dominated Europe and view Berlin's moves with increasing suspicion. Nonetheless, in Germany the United States has an important partner that shares democratic ideals, economic might, international influence, and leverage with Russia. The democratic Germany of today remains an important guarantor as well as beneficiary of the current international order.

The U.S. has traditionally designated its relationship with Britain as a "special relationship" and many historical and pragmatic arguments support such a status. Washington cannot, however, take for granted the initiatives and policy shifts emanating from Berlin. For that

matter, too many other players have already taken notice: China, arguably the world's fastest growing economic and military power, deems its relationship with Germany important enough to be designated a "special relationship."⁶⁸ For its part, Germany (to the chagrin of Washington) recently agreed to join the Asian Infrastructure Bank, China's challenger to the World Bank.⁶⁹ These data points should not suggest that China could usurp Washington's influence and relationship with Germany, but are meant to emphasize that perceptions and terminology matter in international relations. Rather than clinging to strategic paradigms of the past, the United States must recognize that the present and future leader of Europe is Germany—this reality demands a carefully tailored approach.

MILITARY RELATIONSHIPS

The United States must take a pragmatic view of current realities within the European security framework. Dramatic cuts in the British armed forces call into question London's ability to maintain security commitments abroad and respond to emerging crises. More importantly, such realities should give US defense planners pause in terms of their long-term outlook. As former Defense Secretary Robert Gates remarked, "With the fairly substantial reductions in defense spending in Great Britain, what we're finding is that it won't have full spectrum capabilities and the ability to be a full partner as they have been in the past."⁷⁰ In 2015, France has advanced past Great Britain to emerge as America's most significant European military partner.⁷¹ France's efforts to combat Islamic extremism in Northern Africa as well as take a lead role in NATO anchor this foundation. But severe questions about France's economy overshadow its political influence and undermine its ability to invest in military capability. Neither France nor Britain wields the panoply of institutional clout within the European project as Germany.

Germany, as Europe's most prosperous nation, has an economic engine that carries a yet

untapped potential for military development. At the time of this writing, some 2,500 German troops are deployed in more than a dozen hotspots around the world (see figure 4). Germany is the largest contributor to NATO's KFOR mission in Kosovo, the largest non-US troop contributor in Afghanistan, provides aircraft to NATO's Baltic Air Policing Mission, as well as naval vessels to the European Union's Horn of Africa counter-piracy mission (see figure 4).⁷² While these data points are encouraging, Germany must do more to reform its defense acquisition system and develop a comprehensive approach to long-term defense spending that accounts for strategic capabilities. The fact that German defense spending remains at 1.3% presents challenges in convincing smaller, economically-weaker NATO members to increase their collective defense expenditures.

Engaging Berlin on matters of strategic defense reform will be an arduous process that will require considerable time and engagement. The United States can work with Germany both bi-laterally and via NATO to identify niche investment areas in which Berlin can specialize. Washington should adopt a gradual approach, taking advantage of recent concerns within the European security framework over the future of NATO's capabilities. The opportunity to advocate for a greater German defense/security role could not be more ideal—however, Washington should emphasize Germany's existing strengths of organization and efficiency when considering areas for investment. Rather than focusing on the size of Germany's military, Washington should initially recommend support capabilities (e.g. intelligence capabilities, air-to-air refueling, strategic lift, etc.) in which Germany can develop expertise and focus future funding. Owning specific mission sets will afford Germany the opportunity to gradually develop a further leadership role within the alliance construct. Additionally, the US should work to empower the German Ministry of Defense so that it can assume a larger decision-making role in

German policy circles. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has long dominated defense policy, leaving the Ministry of Defense to work capability issues vice macro-level policies.

NSA SCANDAL-REBUILDING TRUST AND NEW INTELLIGENCE PARTNERSHIP

The NSA phone-tapping scandal of 2013, in which the United States allegedly spied on Chancellor Merkel and other senior German officials, had a negative effect on US-German relations. Political opponents of Chancellor Merkel seek to exploit this issue and point to US-German intelligence collaboration as a challenge to German sovereignty. While the fundamentals of top-level US-German cooperation remain solvent, a trust deficit remains below the surface of key issues. Perhaps more profound is the gap in public opinion perceptions. As such, issues such as key US-German cooperation on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) have suffered—largely because of shifts in German public opinion driven by negative perceptions of US intentions. Despite this significant setback, the two countries have an opportunity to leverage the broader issues of Russian aggression in Ukraine and European security cooperation to strengthen and repair relations. As Karen Donfried, President of the German Marshall Fund remarked, “it’s important to note that, while this is certainly a very damaging issue in the relationship, we shouldn’t forget what a critical ally Germany is to the United States and that we’re working very closely with Germany on a whole host of other issues.”⁷³

Germany’s complicated privacy laws make it exceptionally difficult for its intelligence entities and key government ministries to work in concert with each other. Not only does this dysfunctional construct diminish the effectiveness of Germany’s security apparatus, it hinders cooperation with the United States which could yield major dividends. Despite the rhetoric advanced in the press, the NSA wire-tapping scandal does not stand to damage long-term US-

German relations. In a telling August 2013 public opinion survey, 76% of those surveyed (across party lines) did not believe that the NSA-affair would cause serious damage to US-German relations over the long term.⁷⁴ Even more revealing in this data set is the fact that 89% of respondents from the leftist *Die Linke* party (who have been the most vocal critics of Chancellor Merkel and the NSA) stated that they did not believe the NSA scandal would negatively affect relations in the long run.⁷⁵ Irrespective of the press narrative, the US and Germany must work even more closely on matters of intelligence, leveraging the collective expertise of each nation's intelligence services.

INTELLIGENCE SHARING WITH GERMANY

The United States should develop a framework for increased bi-lateral intelligence sharing and cooperation with Germany. In an era of terror networks such as ISIS and al-Qaeda, the cross-border exchange of intelligence is a fundamental tool in the establishment and preservation of security and stability. The dynamics of today's threats require the United States to deepen critical alliances to further develop a silent set of linkages that facilitate a worldwide anti-terror watch and fight. The web of modern terror networks demonstrates that Washington must broaden its own network of capable partners—in other words, train, cooperate, and equip a broad coalition dedicated to protecting democratic ideals.

Furthermore, the tangible results of a robust intelligence sharing relationship with Germany would greatly assist in shifting German public opinion, which remains highly suspect of intelligence-related matters. Eventually, Germany should be admitted to the “Five-Eyes” intelligence sharing framework, along with the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. Such a sweeping initiative would add significant capability to existing members' capabilities as well as better integrate Germany into the framework. Ultimately, such a move will

be an entirely political decision. Germany to date has not indicated a commitment to expand its intelligence sharing relationships in this manner—German public opinion, in the short term, would also likely prevent any agreement from materializing. These realities should not, however, inhibit US policy makers from making overtures toward this outcome.

CONCLUSION

The Germany of 2015 is a truly amazing success story; a nation divided after World War II, reunited, and leading the European project towards the safeguarding of international order and stability. There is no doubt that German economic dominance of the European Union will continue well into the future. Regardless of how the debt crisis is ultimately resolved, Germany will play a key role in maintaining the integrity and unity of the Eurozone. Berlin's newfound political influence will be channeled in the form of increased engagement through international organizations as well as the traditional European economic and security apparatus. There is still much internal debate to be had regarding the limits of Germany's future military and security engagements. However, most politicians in Germany today recognize the fact that their country simply carries far too much economic and political weight to remain silent in the security arena.

As NATO remains challenged by a resurgent Russia, Germany must maintain its bridge to Moscow while simultaneously improving its overall strategic defense structure. President Gauck highlighted the German dilemma of moving forward with a dedicated security policy in that:

"We're...committed to NATO. However, we've been debating for years about the direction the Alliance should take, and we've done nothing to stop the depletion of its financial resources. We're not calling the alliance with the United States into question, but we have observed symptoms of stress and uncertainty about the future."⁷⁶

Indeed, Germany, with the burden of its history, is waiting for direct and indirect support from the United States as it makes significant transitions in its international role. 70 years are certainly sufficient for the country to move past the horrific legacy of National Socialism, for which today's generation of Germans cannot be held responsible. Germany has made significant strides into international leadership since reunification, but seems to be only glacially moving into a bona fide military/security vector.

Assigning a term "special relationship" to Germany does not automatically occur to most in the American and European policy communities. However, one must possess the vision to anticipate future realities vis-à-vis current political arrangements. Washington's future special relationship with Berlin will serve not only to expand bi-lateral relations, but will have international implications concerning the future global order. A more globally engaged Germany capable and willing to participate in security operations is critical to the maintenance of the current international order. There is perhaps no better statement supporting such a position than that of Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski on 29 November 2011: "*I fear German power less today,*" Sikorski announced, "*than German inaction.*" These powerful words, from a senior leader of a country which historically suffered much at the hands of Germany, carry the potent message of just how greatly the world has truly changed. Policymakers in Washington must embrace such changes and develop strategies that benefit America's long-term interests.

Figure 1 - German Contributions to Operation RESOLUTE SUPPORT



Resolute Support Mission

Troop Contributing Nations



	Albania	42		Germany	850		Poland	150
	Armenia	121		Greece	4		Portugal	10
	Australia	400		Hungary	97		Romania	650
	Austria	10		Iceland	4		Slovakia	39
	Azerbaijan	94		Ireland	7		Slovenia	7
	Belgium	43		Italy	500		Spain	294
	Bosnia-Herzegovina	53		Latvia	25		Sweden	30
	Bulgaria	110		Lithuania	70		the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia ¹	38
	Croatia	91		Luxembourg	1		Turkey	503
	Czech Republic	222		Mongolia	120		Ukraine	10
	Denmark	160		Montenegro	15		United Kingdom	470
	Estonia	4		Netherlands	83		United States	6,839
	Finland	80		New Zealand	8		Total	13,195
	Georgia	885		Norway	56			

Note on numbers: The number of troops above reflects the overall contribution of individual contributing nations. They should be taken as indicative as they change daily, in accordance with the deployment procedures of the individual troop contributing nations.

1 Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.

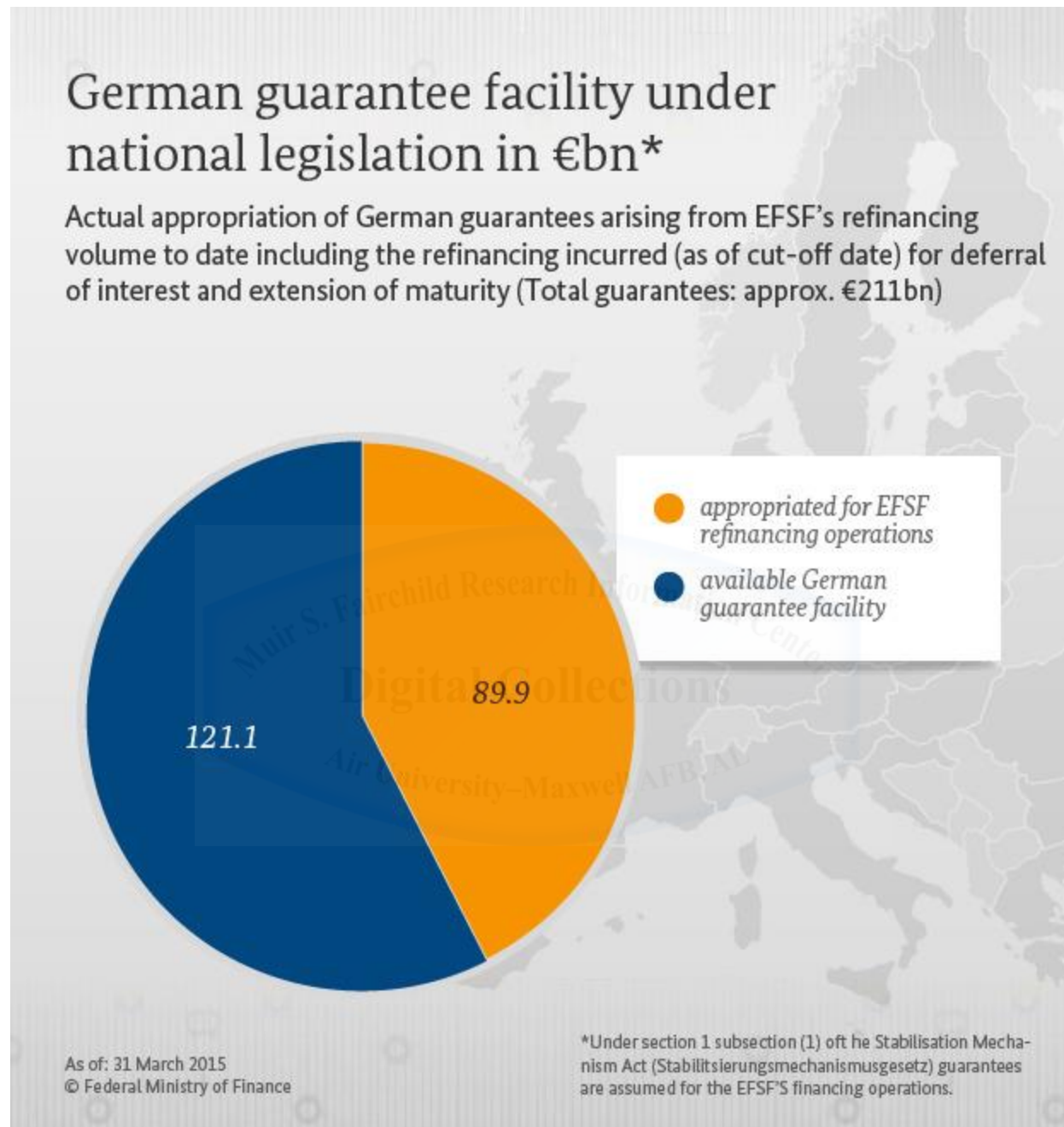
2 See media backgrounder on ["A new chapter in NATO-Afghanistan relations from 2015"](#) and media backgrounder on the [ANA Trust Fund](#).

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Figure 2 – German Financial Assistance for Greece



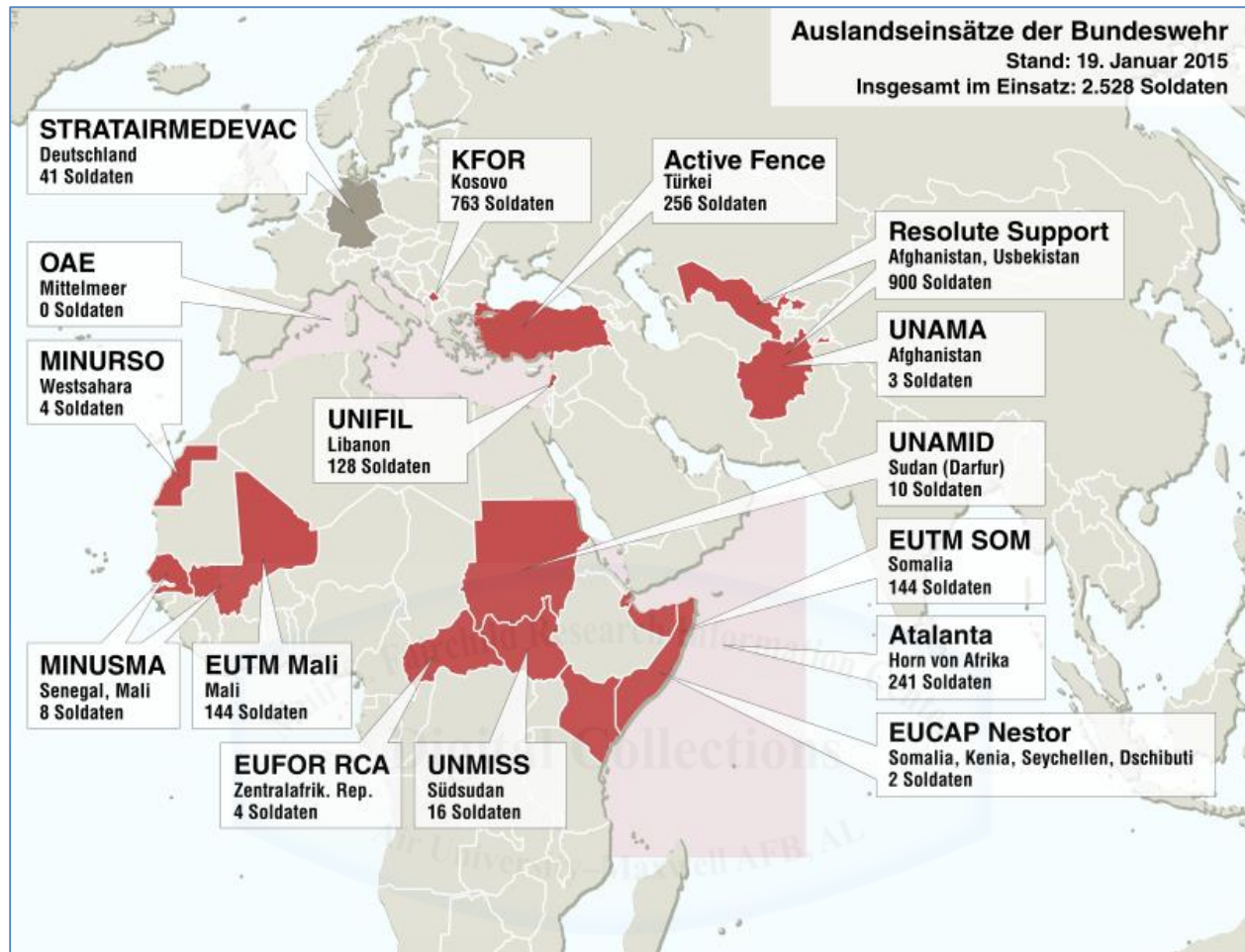
Figure 3 – German Support to European Financial Stability Facility



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Figure 4 -German Overseas Military Commitments

Total troops committed overseas: 2,528 (Jan 2015)



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